

McCarthy

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CIA's Role Is No Bar To Probe

The healthy natural suspicions Americans have for power wielding agencies that operate in secret has been blunted so far as the Central Intelligence Agency is concerned.

The cold war era (and, perhaps, James Bond et al) has made the CIA an accepted feature of American life. It would be naive to suppose this country could get along without such an agency to gather information for and carry out delicate policy aims of the national administration.

So the proposed Senate committee investigation of the CIA creates instant controversy. It invites concern that prying senators might expose things better left unnoticed. It answers no popular demand from a public whose scanty knowledge of the CIA suggests no specific cause for concern at the moment.

Yet there is a general cause for concern about an agency like the CIA at every moment. There is the ever present concern that it will turn its considerable power from gathering information and carrying out policy for an administration to making policy on its own.

Such was the apparent result of CIA moves leading up to the Bay of Pigs in-

vasion. Actions were taken, plans were set in motion which the then Kennedy administration could not quite understand or control. Subsequent reforms satisfied the late President Kennedy that the CIA was under adequate check. President Johnson reportedly believes these safeguards are still adequate today.

But the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has good reason to ask whether a flat presidential assurance on this point is good enough. The Congress has its own independent role to play in vital matters. And this responsibility must weigh heavily on a Senate committee which as recently as last summer found reason to question whether the President acted on sound advice in intervening in the Dominican Republic.

If it honestly concludes the above-board business of foreign relations may be in danger of undue influence from necessary below-board machinations, it has a duty to search out the facts. The need for secrecy in CIA operations as well as the CIA's position within the independent executive branch raise serious complications for such a probe. But they don't put the CIA out of bounds so far as the committee is concerned.